

Terrarium

JR Rhine

This is why you never see your father cry.

-IDLES

A man who once went thru
the proper channels to be my uncle
he had a ponytail and he could
ollie on a skateboard
and he owned a reptile store
from which he sold many
scaly creatures
he kept glass houses in his garage
and an iguana cage in his bedroom
and behind his store was the warehouse
in which he kept the milieu of rodents
and even the bathtub in a room
housed a baby alligator who hissed
and he let me hold the snakes, the lizards
skin to scale, fingers to claws
and one day I held the Rainbow Boa
known for its luminescent skin
its sleek orange body festooned in blue circles
dazzling under the warm light
it coiled around his strong hairy wrist
its diamond-shaped head
black eyes and wispy tongue
cautious before my floating hand
zap! a flash of pain
between thumb and forefinger
my uncle swearing, myself blind-teared and
jerking away
hand bleeding profusely
he dug the fangs out and I ran to the
bathroom
to let the sink spill onto the pinprick holes
my uncle muffled behind the door

prison, I've been told
can exist within the mind
scream
as if to prove oneself a man
kept always under searing light
facades
unsure of their own design
others in the mind
where the magic happens
stored in a construct
squirming in the palms
desperate to be a flower
inside a cell
whispering its cold truth
with a familiar touch
in a bible somewhere
grinning in the sun
gleaming like a hula hoop
on a naked body
which has to be strong
diamond-cased heart
with all its prodded lust
desperate to be a flower
knowing well the distance
to original sin
deaf to the words
jerking off in
a James Bond fantasy once
gender neutral
where it's quiet enough
to let hair and skin whisper to
all the gods who are hairless

and the venom entering my body